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the high passes of the Caucasian Alps represent the first attempt at turning sanctuaries into churches of Our Lord —the first architectural attempts at the reconstruction of *Mairemni* into buildings more suitable for Christian worship. From these crude experiments there grew and developed those Svanian *basilicas*, the best examples of which are the Churches of the Prophet John in Enashi and of the Archangel Michael in Pkhotreri.

The Svanian *basilicas* are not, strictly speaking, very ingenious either in their form or in their detail; even the altar-sections—which together with the south walls are, in Georgian churches, usually most distinguished by luxurious decorations—are unattractive and unassuming. There are exceptions, however, as in the case of the Church of the Virgin at Zhibiani; the Church of Christ near Chubiani; the Church of the Transfiguration at Nemskhvira; the Church of the Archangel Michael at Matskhvarishi and the Church at Pkhotreri.

Ornamentation in Svanian churches generally consists of flat pilasters separated from each other by small and narrow arches as in the Church of the Virgin at Zhibiani. These pilasters have not developed capitals and their decoration is confined to shallow gashes with crude ornamentation carved in zig-zag shape.

Finer and more architecturally artistic are the columned arches which are found on the western and eastern walls of the Church of St. Barbara at Khé, of the Archangels at Matskhvarishi; on the western side of the Enashi Church and of the church at Tenali in Dadianis-Svaneti. This method is, no doubt, copied from Kutais Cathedral and was fashionable in the Byzantine west and in Russian churches of the Vladimir-Suzdal type.

The peculiar genius of the Georgians in the metallurgical arts and in enamel work has already received some recognition in Western Europe. The writings of Kondakov have made known to Western students the treasures of the monasteries and churches of Georgia and Svaneti, and examples of the work of the mediæval Georgian smiths and enamellers have found their way into European and American Museums.[1] The best known examples of the Georgian metal-smith's work are the three principal icons preserved at Gelati; a twelfth-

[1] The gold and enamel reliquary of Queen Katévani described by O. M. Dalton in *Recueil d'études dédiées à la mémoire de P. Kondakov*; the Georgian gold and enamel objects in the Svenigorodskoi Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of New York, including plaques from the twelfth-century icon of Jumati.

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Mediaeval Art: Icon of the Mother of God of Chukhuli

(From a photograph published in *Materiali po Arkheologii Kavkaza*, Vol. X)

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[Medieval Georgia]

century Christ, and a Virgin attributed by Kondakov to the tenth century, at the monastery of Khopi in Mingrelia, and another Virgin dating from the eleventh or twelfth century; a Christ of the twelfth century decorated with contemporary enamels from the Mingrelian monastery at Kezkheri; and the tenth-century Hodigitria at Martvili. The most celebrated of the Gelati icons is the Virgin of Kakhuli, so called since it belonged originally to the monastery of Kakhuli in the Chorokhi country whence it was removed during the Turkish wars of the sixteenth century. The Kakhuli icon is a large gold triptych into which are set no less than ninety-four enamels, of which seventy are of Byzantine and the others of Georgian provenance. The icon itself is attributed to the second quarter of the twelfth century, but many of the enamels are of older date; namely the plaque of Christ crowning the Emperor Michael VII and his wife Maria of Alania,[1] and the two crosses bearing inscriptions in honour of King Kwiriké of Abkhazeti. Diehl compares the Khakhuli icon as a technical masterpiece to the Pala d'Oro of St. Mark's; and Kondakov states that

> "the enamels are notable for precision of design and for the brightness of their colours, in which sky-blue and turquoise blue, tones of violet and purple, and delicate shades of flesh are notable; you see there a self-confidence, a mastery and delicacy in the execution of detail which are only possible when art, having emerged from the period of experiment and uncertainty, has already evolved a set of forms and a perfectly developed ornamentation".[2]

Less known than the Mingrelian icons are those found in Svaneti, many of which have been published by Countess Uvarov.[3] In the Svanian churches are some of the finest survivals of Georgian and Byzantine metallurgical iconography from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, such as the Christ of Zhibiani, the Archangel Gabriel of Lagani and the Archangels Gabriel and Michael of Chukhuli, for the earlier period, and the magnificent Christ of Lagani and the Mother of God of Chukhuli for the fifteenth century.

Icons derive from the portraits of mummies of Hellenistic Egypt executed in *tempera* on wooden panels, first coated with *gesso*, which were laid on the coffins. From the fourth century they began to have a great vogue in the Byzantine

[1] Maria of Alania—or of Abasgia (Abkhazeti). For the discussion of the identity of the Byzantine Empress Maria of Alania see Brosset, who suggests that she was probably no other than Martha, daughter of Bagrat IV (*H. de la G.*, p. 330, note 2).

[2] Kondakov, *Emaux*, p. 126.

[3] Uvarov, *Mat. Kav.*, Vol. X.

532 world, and the adoration which the icons aroused among
177 the masses of the population led to the great "iconoclastic"
778 struggle within the Empire. With the triumph of the Icono-
326 phils in the ninth century, there was a great revival in the fashion, and icons of every class were produced, from the painted wooden panels of the poor to the exquisite achievements of the jeweller's art which decorated the palaces of the great.

The icon was essentially an artistic medium of the Byzantine mind and the Georgians undoubtedly adopted from the
532 Byzantines the cult and the art of the icon. Georgian painted
778 icons are never of first quality, although they early achieved a
326 certain humanism which is lacking in Byzantine and contemporary painting, and which is exemplified both in some of the Gelati icons and in the frescoes at Nekresi in Kakheti. Georgian goldsmiths work is, however, the equal of any that came from the workshops of Byzantium—where indeed many Georgians were employed—and Georgian enamel work is little, if at all, inferior to Byzantine work. The metallurgical arts—which had such a high development in the Middle Ages—seem to have attracted the genius of the Georgians, and they attained a degree of technical perfection which compares with that of Byzantium and Italy, and elevates them far above the contemporary workers in metallurgy in Eastern Europe, Russia and Armenia. The chief difference between Georgian and Byzantine metallurgical iconography is to be found in the non-representational character of the Georgian work. Byzantine icons generally have a plain background, although they may have an embossed frame-like border; the background of Georgian icons is entirely filled by complicated designs, similar in character to the elaborate sculptured designs of Georgian churches. These backgrounds constitute the very special beauty of Georgian icons, and the combination of this non-representational and geometric art with the essential elements of East Christian artistic technique represents a Georgian synthesis of Western and Eastern conceptions.

Georgian enamels are rather coarse in drawing and less accurate in finish than the Byzantine examples. The *cloisons* are more distinct and less neat, and the colour-schemes are less delicate in tone, although the Georgian enamellers achieved the eight colours of the Byzantines. The Georgians excelled particularly in the manufacture of elaborate geometrical plaques, and here they surpassed the Byzantine workers, the

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development of whose process was always limited by their tendency to adhere to representational designs.

By the fourteenth century the Georgian icon had already begun to deteriorate, and by the end of the sixteenth century it has lost all artistic value. The influence of Capuchin monks had introduced a certain element of the Italianate, and the icons of this period, as for instance the Virgin of Kavtis-Khevi, were becoming thoroughly bastardized.

The church plate of the time of the mediæval Georgian Kingdom illustrates further both the skill of Georgian craftsmen and the wealth of the Georgian nobles. Byzantine influence was strong, and the finest example of all which survives, the enamelled gold cross in the Svanian church of Matskhvarishi, is attributed by Countess Uvarov to Byzantine workmanship of the twelfth century. Georgian workmanship in reliquaries, cups, plate and crosses was, however, exceedingly fine, and in many pieces, as in the large gold and enamel *bazarpeshni* or drinking spoons (a purely Georgian fashion), the Georgian craftsmen evolved their own interpretation of both Byzantine and Persian decorative motives.

The few of the Georgian bronze church-gates which survive show exquisite workmanship, and like the stone-sculptures and the carved wooden gates which are preserved at Mghvimé Monastery, in the Svanian churches, and in the Tiflis Museum, they are essentially of local inspiration, a Georgian combination of the national decorative designs—such as the interlaced—with Persian and Byzantine elements introduced.

Byzantium, before all, was a civilization; secondly, a political Empire. And until the fifteenth century the civilization of the Near Eastern lands was in essentials Byzantine. East Christian art was the expression of the Byzantine mind—a stone the facets of which reflected different lights according to whether the eyes cast upon it were Bulgarian or Armenian, Rumanian or Georgian, Serbian or Russian.

The Byzantines were the creators of painting as a living art, and their pupils were Italy in great degree, the Russian Masters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the provincial schools of Greece and Serbia, Bulgaria and Rumania (which though limited in many ways were not without merit), and the Armenians and Georgians. The Balkan schools, in the last decade, have come in for their meed of appreciation from European students, and the material for Greek and Balkan iconography is plentiful. But the Armenian and

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030 Georgian artists have been ignored; and indeed, wars, anarchy and time have destroyed the most of the material by which their work could have been compared with that of the western schools of East Christian art.

Georgia has preserved few examples of pure Byzantine colour work. The most celebrated is the twelfth-century mosaic of the Church of the Virgin at Gelati; the mosaic was a gift from Alexios Comnenos to David Aghmashenebeli. The Church of Gordi in Mingrelia possesses a Virgin, attributed to the tenth century—and if the attribution is correct it is the oldest known Byzantine painted icon. It was brought to Georgia, according to tradition, by Elena, wife of Bagrat IV—he who completed the building of Kutais Cathedral. In Svaneti, Countess Uvarov noted in different churches eleven Byzantine painted icons, two of which she attributed to the twelfth century. There are also in the shrines of Gelati, Khopi, Mtzkheta, Tsalendjikhi, Alaverdi and Largwisi, a number of attractive painted icons, but these belong to the relatively late period of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[1]

532 In the manufacture of icons it has been remarked that
●778 the Georgian genius and taste developed in the direction of the smith's craft. There are, however, two early painted icons described by Mourier, the character of which indicates that the Georgians had attained merit in this class of painting; one at Gelati showing King Bagrat IV in an attitude of prayer before the Virgin and Child; another at Shemokhmedi of the Virgin and Child. Both these icons are in clear bright colours and the physiognomy of the subjects is typically Georgian.

532 The churches of Georgia were covered with frescoes and of these some remain, although they are without exception in a badly neglected condition. The native work is, on the whole, of inferior quality. The laws of perspective were not studied, and the colours were applied flat without any shading. A slavish adherence to Greek formulas without the knowledge to interpret them produced an inferior style, which resulted in monotony of design, absence of relief, crudity of execution and lack of *nuances*. Much attention was, however, devoted to accuracy of detail in costume, which gives the work

[1] The author had in his possession a Virgin and Child of this class—with a Russian superscription imposed. The type is very distinct from the formalised Greek and Russian styles, and represents in fact the portrait of a Georgian girl and child. The humanistic treatment is remarkable. The icon now belongs to the Church of the Georgian community in Paris.

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Zisserman concerning this question, he adds:[12] "Ich moechte noch weiter gehen und annehmen dass unter den Vohrfahren der chewsuren Deutsche gewesen sind, etwa die Nachkommen der Kreuzfaehrer. . . ." In confirmation of his opinion the author sees not only the knightly arms, but also: (1) the presence among the Khevsurs of tall blond men; (2) the veneration of the cross with manifestations reminiscent of Catholic usages; (3) the sacred beer; and (4) the silver cups with engraved Gothic buildings on them.

Analyzing the validity of the four main points brought out by the author in support of his opinion concerning the presence of German ancestry among the Khevsurs, we bring up for discussion the fourth point, which may appear to be the most convincing, that is, the preparation and use of beer by the Khevsurs.

That the Khevsurs brew beer, consume it in large quantities, and even regard it as a sacred beverage, is quite true; and that the Germans are also a beer-drinking people is also a known fact; but this circumstance cannot be used, as Mr. Busch thinks, as an indication of the possible relation of the Khevsurs and Germans to each other, because beer-brewing was known to and practiced by the ancient peoples of Asia Minor—the Sumerians and Akkadians[13]—thousands of years ago. There were three different sorts and qualities of beer known in the ancient world: the black beer, called *bilittu;* the beer of middle quality; and the beer mixed with water as the lowest quality.

From Babylonia the preparation of beer was transmitted to Egypt, where it was similarly made from barley, of which "a large quantity must have been grown; for barley bread was much in request, and the grain was also malted and beer brewed from it."[14] In addition to the method of preparing beer, it is also known that the most popular method of drinking beer among the Babylonians, Hittites, and other ancient peoples of Asia Minor was to suck the beverage with hollow reeds.[15] On many Babylonian and

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[12] Busch: 224.
[13] Hrozny.
[14] Rawlinson: I, 83.
[15] Meyer: 55-6.

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795 torted Christian rites and the obsolete and ruined places of worship. The ruins of the old churches found in the country of the Abkhazians were surprising to European investigators by their beauty and the magnificence of their architecture.

In addition to the ruins of churches, many other remains of Christianity have been preserved by the people, such as the various Christian rites practiced by the Circassians.

778 The religious practices of the Circassians bear a close resemblance to the religious rites and festivals practiced by the Georgian Highlanders. Another point of resemblance between these two groups is their veneration of trees.[17] The places of worship in the Georgian Highlands are usually situated in or near a wood which is the property of the church and regarded as sacred, and from [313] which the Svan will permit no one to cut down a single tree. These woods usually surround the ruins of ancient Svan churches.[18] As an illustration, the Russian investigator, I. A. Bartolomei, mentions the sacred forest in the community of Kali in Svanetia. "I saw the enclosure of a small monastery surrounded by a dense forest," writes Mr. Bartolomei.[19] "This was the monastery of St. Quirik, revered as almost the greatest sanctuary in Free Svanetia . . . . Incidentally, it should be noted that the community of Kali complains a great deal for want of a proper forest. In reply to my remark that the place in which we were traveling was covered with ancient trees, the guides told me that this belonged to the church and no one was allowed to cut a single branch from it for fear of God's wrath. If this were done, the people believed that He would send hail of enormous size to punish them."

As Bartolomei says, the want of wood and the scarcity of trees in Kali likewise attracted the attention of D. Z. Bakradze to the superb forests belonging to the monastery of St. Quirik. He, too, writes about this, noting the obedience of the people to religious rules. "These forests," says Bakradze,[20] "consist of pine trees and are kept in sacred esteem by the natives, so that in spite of the

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[17] Chursin, g.
[18] Teptsov: a, 34.
[19] Bartolomei: 151-3.
[20] Bakradze: a, 51.

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need of timber in Kali they are preserved undamaged to the present time."

Information of similar character concerning these sacred woods in the Georgian Highlands is supplied by almost every traveler and explorer who has visited these regions.

The maintenance of the sacred woods and the veneration of trees was a common trait among all Georgians in past times. At present the churches and monasteries in the Lowlands of Georgia are surrounded by magnificent old trees which grow unmolested. Even the places of worship may bear the name of a tree. For example, the well-known monastery in Megrelia is called "the monastery of Tchkon-didi," meaning "the monastery of the Great Oak," from the Megrelian words *tchkoni* (oak) and *didi* (large or great). I myself remember that during my visits in the villages of Megrelia during summer vacations I was told many times that I must avoid breaking the branches of a tree, because this is a sin (*tsoda*) in Megrelia and that a tree feels and suffers as a man does.

It should be noted that these beliefs connected with trees and woods are not peculiar to the Georgians only, but are shared by the other peoples of the Caucasian peninsula—by the Circassians, for example. Thus the French traveler, M. Taitbout de Marigny, relates concerning his visit to the sacred woods in Circassia:[21] "Ver le soir nous risquâmes une promenade dans une bois sacré qui est a une petite distance du rivage. Une croix grossiérement faite, et dont la partie supérieure à la form d'un trèfle, consacre ce lieu a la religion; et on n'oserait y couper des arbres, ni même toucher, aux objets qu'on y vient déposer. Le signe du christianisme qui y est conservé leur a été transmis par lèurs ancêtres. Ils ignorent ce qu'il représente . . . ." The sacred groves of the Circassians are also described in the works of J. S. Bell[22] and J. A. Longworth.[23]

Every community of the Georgian Highlands has its place of worship—the sanctuary called *Khati*, meaning in Georgian, "holy

[21] Taitbout de Marigny: b, 306.
[22] Bell.
[23] Longworth.

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778 image," although in the majority of cases there is no image of
846 any kind present in the sanctuary. The word *khati* designates a holy image (icon), and also the whole place of worship (sanctuary); moreover, it is used as the name and personification of
[624] the deity itself. Besides being a place of worship, the *Khati* is the center of the social and political life of the community.

The various Khatis are believed to possess different forces: some of them are regarded as more powerful than others and are called *magari Khati,* meaning "strong image," from the Georgian words magari (strong) and Khati (holy image). The people think that the *Khatis* differ from each other not only in power but also in quality. Consequently, some of the *Khatis* are approached only in special cases. For example, there are *Khatis* which are regarded as protectors of the shepherds; other *Khatis* protect hunters and farmers; and there are even *Khatis* for the protection of thieves and robbers, to whom the latter pray for help and give thank offerings after a successful theft or a work of brigandage. And we find among the Khevsurs that the *Khati* called *Sameba-Tsrolis-Khado,* situated in the village of Ukhand-Khado, is regarded as the special protector of hunters and robbers, who give a part of their spoils to this *Khati* as a thank offering for the success of their expeditions. This *Khati* is believed to possess also the power to make barren women fruitful. The *Khati* of Gudani, which has the surname of "God's leader of hosts," is viewed as the protector against thieves and beasts of prey and as the healer of human and animal diseases. The *Khati* of Karatis Jvari is supposed to exercise great power over various evil spirits.

Among the Svans the leading sanctuary is that of St. Quirike.

The principal sanctuaries (*Khatis*) of the Khevsurs are four: (1) *Gudanis-Jvari;* (2) *Khakhmatis-Jvari;* (3) *Sanebis-Jvari;* and (4) *Karatis-Jvari.*

The names of the sanctuaries originated mostly from the names of the villages where they are situated, with the addition of the word *jvari.* This word means "a cross." One exception, however, in Khevsuria is the *Karatis-Jvari,* which is situated in the village of Likoki. Incidentally, the Ossets also call their places of worship and reverence and the ruins of old churches found in

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their country by the name of *dzvari*, which is derived from the Georgian word *jvari* (cross) and indicates the influence which the Georgian Church rendered in the propagation of Christianity among the Ossets. Mr. R. D. Eristov[24] gives in tabular form the names of all the sanctuaries and the number of *dekanozis* and *khutsis* in Khevsuria. According to his information, at that time (1854) there were in Khevsuria fifteen sanctuaries (*Khatis*), with two *dekanozis*[a] and twelve *khutsis*.

The sanctuary of *Lashris-jvari*, dedicated to St. George, was built in Pshavia, according to the Georgian historian Prince Vakhusht, by the son of the famous Georgian Queen Thamar, King George IV, called Lasha. Describing the country of the Pshavs, Prince Vakhusht writes:[25] "Here in Pshavia is a church built by King Lasha in which there are preserved a great number of gold and silver holy images (icons) and crosses, vessels and books. They call it *Lashris-jvari* and keep it in great respect. No one among the Pshavs and Khevsurs who has acquired gold or silver has a right to use it for himself, but must present it to the *Lashris-jvari*."

Queen Thamar and her son Georgi Lasha were held in such high esteem by the people that they were deified and the churches which, it is supposed, were built by them were dedicated to them and given their names — *Lashris-jvari* (the cross of Lasha) and the *Khati Thamar-mepe* (King Tamar—the word *mepe* in the Georgian language means king).

The sanctuaries (*Khatis*) of the Khevsurs and Pshavs are built of slates without mortar, near the village, and usually in the midst of woods which are considered sacred—usually old and luxurious oak, plane, ash, and beech trees. The *Khati* represents a small square room without windows and is also called *Krvivi*. In the middle of the *Khati* is sometimes placed a cross, and in a heap on the floor are different objects representing offerings made by the people. But the most important thing in the *Khati* is the standard (*drosha*) possessed by every sanctuary and exercising a great influence upon the people, who view it with eyes of

[24] Eristov: a, 109.
[25] Vakhusht: 109-110.
[a] [i.e., attendants — Analyst]

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reverence and fear, and in time of war the people follow their *drosha* without hesitation in risking their lives. The *drosha* is a silver-set pole with a silver ball (*baragchi*) at the top, upon which is fixed an iron spear. Around the *drosha* is wound a piece of cloth called *sakadrisi*, meaning worthy.[26] Instead of an iron spear, the *drosha* may have also a cross, plain or with crucifix.[27] "The *drosha* presents a kind of sign or standard," writes Uvarov, "consisting of a tall wooden pole with gilded silver balls on the top, upon which is affixed a cross. Below the cross are attached simple cotton handkerchiefs instead of a banner. The crosses on two *droshas* in the village of Gudani are of gilded silver and present a crucifix of poor workmanship." Some small bells are attached to the *droshas*.[28] Outside the *Khati*, on a rudely hewn post hangs the church bell.
church bell.

Nobody is permitted to enter the *Khati* except the *dekanozi*, the attendants.

Besides the Khati, there are other buildings on the sacred grounds which are used for various purposes in the religious proceedings of the people: (1) a low, dark hut surrounded by a stone wall, which serves as a storage place for the vessels used during the brewing of the beer, drinking cups, etc., all being the property of the *Khati* and regarded as sacred; (2) a second hut which is used as the brewery and which contains enormous flat copper pots with inclined sides. Some of them are so large that they are capable of holding thirty Russian puds[29] of barley, from which the beer is made. Beer is regarded as a sacred drink and is prepared by specially appointed attendants of the *Khati*, the *dasturis*. (3) The third cabin is used by the *dekanozi* as a lodging place during the special holidays and is called *darbazi*. (4) The fourth building, which serves as the meeting-hall, is called *sastumro*, meaning the guestroom, from the Georgian words, *stumari* (guest). It is also called *sajaro*, meaning "for the people," from the word *jari* (army, multitude of people).

[26] Eristov: a, 99.
[27] Uvarov: 234-5.
[28] Khakhanov: a, 45.
[29] Pud—Russian measure of weight; 1 pud = 31.11 pounds.

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Besides the above-mentioned buildings on the sacred grounds of the *Khati* there are also: (1) an altar put together from stones. On the altar is placed a cup, and around it are placed different objects, such as beads, small looking-glasses, pieces of metal, money, etc., which are brought by the people as offerings to the *Khati*. (2) Near the altar is a pit covered with stone slabs and having a quadrangular aperture through which runs the blood of sacrificed animals, the skulls of which are hung or set up on the branches of the trees nearby. (3) The stone pillar about one and one-half metres high, with a square base and gradually inclined forward to the flat top, so that the pillar represents the form of a truncated pyramid. Upon it is found a great number of horns of different shapes and kinds from wild animals which have been killed and brought as thank-offerings to the *Khati* by hunters. During the special religious celebrations and festivals, the candles are fixed upon it and burned in honor of the *Khati*.

The whole ground occupied by the *Khati*, the other buildings, and the sacred grove is surrounded by a stone wall. Women, who are regarded as unclean, have no right to enter the walled precincts of the *Khati*. During the religious festivals and celebrations, which present an occasion for plenty of eating and still more drinking, the women are served outside the *Khati* walls, where they have a good time in their own way.

These sanctuaries (*Khatis*) have special attendants who are the guardians of the material belongings of the sanctuaries as well as the faithful conservers of all traditions and the executors of the different ceremonies which constitute their religion. The number of these attendants is considerable and each of them has a special name and special duties to perform.

Although having the same names, the prerogatives of the attendants of the *Khati* in the different communities are not the same. The attendant, for example, called *dasturi* has more obligations in one community than in another; the same is true of the other servants of the *Khati*: the *dekanozi*, *khutsi*, and *khevis-beri*. The name has not the same equivalent of rank. Consequently the accounts of various authors concerning the different categories of the attendants of the *Khati* and their functions are not in accord-

[see p. 25 ff. -- Analyst]

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stalled as *khutsi*. The fulfillment of this wish of the *Khati* has as a consequence the recovery of the sick person, but if there is no such recovery the explanation is that the *Khati* has refused to accept the candidate.

At once, after his appointment, the new *khutsi* brings to the *Khati* an ox as a sacrifice.

The *khutsi* is regarded by the people as a sacred person. His duties consist in saying the prayers, performing marriage ceremonies, bestowing the benediction upon the people during the religious festivals and gatherings, killing the sacrificial animals and conducting funerals and commemorative ceremonies for the dead. In the custody of the *khutsi* are also, in many sanctuaries, the sacred silver vessels of the *Khati* which are, in many cases, worth a fortune, amounting in value sometimes to as much as twenty thousand rubles in silver,[31] and which are kept concealed in dug-out holes. According to Eristov, the *dasturi*, and not the *khutsi*, are the custodians of these silver vessels. The *khutsi* also takes care of the community standard (the drosha), which, as we have said, is so highly esteemed by the people that when the *khutsi* carries it out of the *Khati* on special occasions and shows it to the people, everyone goes down on his knees in deep reverence and shouts repeatedly the words of the *khutsi:* "Victory to the Lord and His servants!" In the silence which ensues the *khutsi* takes a cup of beer, and keeping it lifted high in his right hand, pronounces a curse against every thief who has taken anything from the treasury of the *Khati* or belonging to the community. Simultaneously he pours out the sacred beer on the ground and says: "So may be emptied the house, family and fortune of the culprit!"

The duties of the *khutsi* differ from those of the *dekanozi*.[32] Although they both take part in the religious celebrations, the *khutsi* has no right to kill the sacrificial animals brought by the people. But the *khutsi* has the advantage of conducting funeral ceremonies, in which the *dekanozi* does not mix. Although the *khutsis* are subordinate to the *dekanozis*, there are also *khutsis* who perform both

[31] Eristov: a, 99.
[32] *Ibid.*, 102.

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whither he goes by a special pathway which cannot be used by anyone but him. He must take the baths, regardless of weather or the time of year.

All the above-mentioned attendants of the *Khati* have their office either for a certain period of time, as the *shulta* and *dasturi*, or for life, as the *khutsi* and *dekanozi*. None of these duties is hereditary. Besides the above mentioned dignitaries of the sanctuary, there is one more, called the *khevis-beri*, whose post is hereditary, and if he dies without issue his place is filled by the *khutsis*, *dekanozis* and *dasturis*. According to Professor A. Khakhanov, the duty of the *khevis-beri* is not hereditary among the Tushes, but the official is chosen for life. Incidentally, it should be mentioned that Professor Khakhanov calls almost all attendants of the Tush Khati, *khevis-beri*. This word means, in English translation, "the elder of the defile," and is formed from two Georgian words: *khevi* (gorge or defile) and *beri* (monk or elder).

The people hold the *khevis-beri* in the greatest respect. He is the loyal guardian of the *Khati* and the preserver of the old traditions of the community. His duties were, as Mr. Urbneli thinks, of a purely political character. The *khevis-beris* were appointed by the Georgian kings, and only later, with the breaking of the close ties (owing to political causes) between the Lowlands—center of administration and culture—and the high mountain regions, were the duties of the *khevis-beri* gradually transformed from civil to religious character. The same opinion is expressed by Professor Khakhanov.[35]

If, after this review of the places of worship and their attendants among the Khevsurs, Pshavs and Tushes, we turn to Svanetia, we notice that a Svan church is usually a small structure built of roughly-hewed stones with a roof of thin planks. In architecture the Svan churches resemble ordinary houses. However, they are usually set apart from the dwellings, surrounded by woods, and have a stone enclosure, with a church bell suspended from a pole nearby. (Usually, on the outer walls saints and mythical heroes are pictured in the Persian style.) The interior of the churches is dark and small; the largest can accommodate no more

[35] Khakhanov: a, 44.

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than eighty persons. Rods are stretched from the ceiling to support the horns of wild goats and jaw-bones of sheep which have been offered as sacrifices; these relics are so numerous that they almost fill the churches, especially those in Free Svanetia. In the corners are piles of various objects, such as arrows, helmets, pieces of broken glass, and what not. Especially interesting are the wooden cages with birds carved out of wood and hanging from the ceiling. All objects preserved in the churches are regarded as sacred. The walls inside the churches are covered with images of the saints and sometimes pictures of the kings with crowns on their heads. Characteristic of every Svan church is the large wooden cross fixed in the farther part of the church on a square elevation. Such crosses are covered with thin silver plates representing small icons (holy images). Similar crosses are also found in the churches of Dadian Svanetia, in Ilori, and in Ratcha.[36] All these churches possess, according to Bakradze, a large number of holy images, crosses and sacred books, especially those in Upper Svanetia, comprising the communities of Mujal, Mesti, Kali, and Ushkul.

The horns of animals sacrificed as thank-offerings, are preserved in the churches, such large were piles of these horns in a church in the village of Chubiani "that it was necessary to count them by thousands."[37]

The Svan churches, with all their archeological treasures as well as their worthless objects, such as broken glass, earthenware, jaw-bones of sacrificed animals, etc., were jealously guarded by the native priests (*bap* in Free Svanetia and *pap* in Dadian Svanetia). The word *pap*, or *bap*, is borrowed from the Megrelian language, in which a priest is called *papa*. The *paps* have their assistants, called *mtavar* and *dikvnar*.

The office of the *pap* is not hereditary, because anyone may attain it by fulfilling all the necessary preparations, but in the meantime the son of a *pap* has special privileges in following his father in the office without being required to make any special preparation. The *paps* came from the lower class of society — the

[36] Bakradze: a, 36
[37] Radde: a, 112-14.

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giving her water to drink, says: "Child, separate from the mother, as I have separated the frog from the snake!"

In this last-mentioned custom we have the belief in the magical power of the action of separation with the same object of helping the woman in travail and speeding the delivery as is used in other actions, such as opening, division, unlocking, emptying, etc.

The Georgians of Imerethi,[34] in order to protect the child from the evil spirits, put in its cradle, under the pillow, a knife with a black handle, and charcoal. Many pregnant women carry a knife with them during the day, and at night keep them under their pillows—for the purpose of keeping the evil spirits and their dangerous influence away from them.

Among the Georgians of the province of Ratcha[35] the woman delivers her child in a separate room. She is put, not on a bed, but on straw which is spread on the floor. And as the woman is very weak by this time, they believe that the evil spirit may easily seize her *sheipkros,* as they say in Georgian. To avoid this danger, they put under her pillow the holy image of the Virgin Mary and a dagger, as in their opinion the two-edged dagger is the only weapon of which the evil spirit is afraid.

In this case we have the usual mixture in the Caucasus of the old primitive beliefs with Christianity. The image of the Virgin Mary is endowed with the same magical power of protection from evil spirits as a piece of iron—the dagger.

The belief in the magical power of a dagger (iron) is clearly manifested in the customs of the Pshavs,[36] observed during the marriage ceremony, when the brother of the bride, at the time of the procession around the house-hearth, strikes with his dagger the iron chain called *sakideli,* in order to keep the evil spirits away from the bride. The dagger is considered by the Pshavs, as we mentioned previously,[37] as a sacred object, *samkhtho saganía,* and drives evil spirits away.

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[34] Mashrko: 306.
[35] Japaridze: 138.
[36] Khizanashvili: 125.
[37] See Chapter VI on Marriage.

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In describing the customs of the Georgian Highlanders and the Georgians in general pertaining to the protection of women and children against the aggression of evil spirits, we found that iron is regarded by them as possessed with special magical power. Not only iron as a metal, but also the profession connected with it, as that of a blacksmith, is viewed by the people as supernatural and endowed with magical power. This is clearly seen in the beliefs of the Georgians of Samurzagan.[88]

Not only iron as a metal, but also the blacksmith's trade, all objects associated with it, and the person of the blacksmith himself are regarded by the people as endowed with supernatural or magical powers. The people look with reverence and fear on the blacksmith's anvil. They expect from it the healing of the sick and help in all kinds of difficulties of their earthly life. They take the oath upon the anvil and are convinced that the oath-breaker will be severely punished with some kind of misfortune. Believing in the supernatural power of the anvil, they offer to it numerous gifts, consisting of goats, oxen, and money. Some do this out of gratitude, others from fear. One suspected of theft or a debtor refusing to meet his obligations is compelled to take the oath on the anvil in order to clear himself of suspicion.

Like the blacksmith's anvil, the person of the blacksmith also is held in high esteem by the people. The blacksmith is regarded as a diviner and sorcerer. If someone is ill he sends one of his relatives or friends to the blacksmith for help and to find out the cause of the illness. The blacksmith either satisfies the petitioner himself or announces secretly in a mysterious way that the affliction is sent either as punishment for some wrong committed by the ill person or simply that the anvil demands from the stricken person a fitting offering. Usually the kind of offering is indicated, as a white goat with straight horns, or a brown ox with a long tail reaching to the ground, or perhaps money. It is necessary to note that in naming the animals to be offered or the money to be paid, the blacksmith takes into consideration the economic status of the petitioner, and in his choice sacrifical

[88] Machavariani, D., and Bartolomei, A.: 74-83.

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seizure (*akho*). New clearings were forbidden by the government and, if made, were done so only by special permission of the authorities.

Most forests were the property of the Church. Almost every investigator or mere traveler who has visited the country of the Georgian Highlanders describes the rich virgin forests belonging to the Church. We have already mentioned such forests in Svanetia,[21] as described by Bartolomei[22] and Bakradze.[23] The same situation was found among the Khevsurs. The forests representing Church property are called by the Khevsurs, Pshavs and Tushes, *sakhato* forests, and they are usually situated around the sanctuaries or not far from them. Such forests are very easily recognized by their large old trees. No one is permitted to approach these trees or to break off their branches.

Besides the forests, the Church property consists of arable land, vineyards, flocks of sheep, and church utensils and vessels.

All members of every community are members of the local sanctuary, the arable land, and pasture grounds (*sakhato mitsebi*, of property." The property of the sanctuary (*khati*) is called *sakhato*, and consists of different buildings representing the sanctuary, the arable land, and pasture grounds (*sakhato mitsebi*, meaning "church lands"). Besides the above-mentioned property of the *khati*, there are also silver and copper vessels and utensils necessary in the brewing of beer, called *ludi*, and for church festivals. All the property of the *khati* is regarded as common property of all the *mogantsuri*. The supervision and care of the church property is entrusted to the attendants of the sanctuary—*dekanozi*, *khutsi*, *dasturi*, and others.

Almost every sanctuary in Khevsuria and Pshavia possessed large copper pots, valued at from one hundred to two hundred rubles, and used for brewing beer from barley.[24] Some sanctuaries possessed silver vessels of different form and size, with the names of the donors inscribed on them, and worth from one to

[21] See Chapter III.
[22] Bartolomei: 151-3.
[23] Bakradze: 51.
[24] Eristov: 99.

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twenty thousand rubles. Dr. Radde (1878) relates that he found silver vessels in a sanctuary in Khevsuria valued at fifteen hundred rubles. "Diese gefaesse bilden den hauptsaechlichsten Reichtum des heidnischen Tempels. Im vorliegenden Falle konnte ich sie wohl auf einen Worth von 1500 Rubel schaetzen."[25] Concerning the Pshav sanctuary *Lashris jvari,* Klaproth writes (1808):[26] "It is said to contain many golden images of saints, crosses and church utensils, for to this place the Pshavs and Tushes bring all the gold and silver that fall into their hands." All this wealth is in the custody of the *dekanozi,* who preserve them in well-hidden pits. About the same sanctuary Prince Vakhusht writes (1789):[27] "In Pshavia is a church erected by Kink Lasha, where there are preserved a great number of gold and silver icons (holy images), crosses, vessels and books. They call this church *Lashris-jvari,* and hold it in great veneration. There is not one Pshav or Khevsur who will keep gold and silver for himself; he has no right to it, but must present it to the church of *Lashris-jvari.*"

Besides the above-named vessels and utensils, the sanctuaries also possessed vineyards,[28] which were situated in the Georgian province of Kakhethi, famous for its excellent varieties of wine. The wine from these vineyards, called *kulukhi,* is used for the church festivals, where enormous quantities of beer and wine are consumed by the thirsty throats of the mountaineers. These drinking orgies always end in fighting and brawling.

The purchase of a vineyard or other necessary properties for the sanctuary was made in the following manner: the *khevis-beri* of one of the sanctuaries called the people together on the meeting grounds and announced his wish to them concerning the purchase of a vineyard or some other property for the sanctuary, and asked them to make the assessments of money among themselves for this purpose. The necessary funds were contributed promptly and willingly by the community and given to *khevis-beri,* who arranged the purchase.

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[25] Radde: c, 259.
[26] Klaproth: a, 396.
[27] Vakhusht: 109-10.
[28] Zisserman: 233; Eristov: 99, 108.

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Prince Vakhusht[45] relates the usage of taking the oath in Georgia: "The oath is taken in the case of an insignificant offense," he writes, "at trials for thefts and in property disputes."

The oaths are taken in the name of the holy images, of sanctuaries, of dead ancestors, in the name of Queen Thamar and her son Lasha (by the Pshavs), in the name of "Mother Earth" (*deda mitsa*), in the name of children and husband (by married women), in the name of brother (by sister). The oaths have been taken also upon the carcass of a cat,[46] and upon a blacksmith's anvil.

"They consider cats also as some sort of sacred animal, as the ancient Egyptians did," writes Gulbiani about the Svans, "and they never, for any price, will agree to kill a cat, which they consider a great sin."[47]

I myself have been told many times that to kill a cat is a great sin, and that he who commits this act will have after his death *Tskhratsodva*, meaning in English, nine sins.

Besides the cat, the blacksmith's anvil was regarded as possessed of supernatural power, and was also used as a medium in taking an oath. "The Georgians of Samurzakan take an oath upon it and believe that the oath-breaker will be severely punished with some sort of misfortune."[48] The details concerning the beliefs of the people regarding the blacksmith's anvil are described in the chapter on sex and religion.

The Tushes had two ways of taking an oath.[49] Either the man who was taking the oath must walk thrice around the altar with the sacred standard and then take the oath; or the ceremony took place, not in the sanctuary as mentioned, but near the graves of the oath-taker's ancestors. The man knelt, and before him were placed the saddle of an ass and a vessel used for feeding dogs. The persons present at the ceremony addressed the dead with these words: "Our deceased! We are bringing this man to your justice; give him to whom you may desire in sacrifice and servi-

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[45] Vakhusht: 7.
[46] Stepanov: 90.
[47] Gulbiani: 91.
[48] Machavariani, Bartolomei: 81.
[49] Zisserman: 250; Khakhanov: a, 54.

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FOLK RELIGION

C.
G.
777
177 The major religions in the Caucasus are Christianity (Georgians except Adzhar and Ingilo; Armenians except Hemshily; Ossetes except Digor; Udi) and Islam (all the rest, except the Mountain Jews and Yezid). But many traces of the older pagan religious view remain. Among the mountaineers in the N. W. Caucasus Islam was introduced comparatively recently (seventeenth century), and in many cases reached only the upper classes. In Dagestan, with its stronger Islamic tradition, the ancient beliefs have disappeared to a much larger extent. In Georgia, Christianity has absorbed many pagan features, and among the Kartvelian mountaineers it was rather paganism that adopted certain outward characteristics of Christianity. In the N. W. Caucasus, the pre-Islamic pagan religion preserved curious vestiges of Christianity which had been introduced from Georgia in the time of queen Tamar, and perhaps even earlier. Here and there in the Caucasus there are remains of the influence of Zoroastrianism.

C.
G.
778 The old Caucasian religion was closely connected with family and sib organization. It centered around the house-hearth, above which hung the cooking pot, suspended from an iron chain (Georg. sak'ide(be)li), which had a symbolic value and was believed to be endowed with supernatural powers. It could not

C. G. 778 be sold; touching chain or kettle gave one the status of a guest; to throw the kettle out of the hut was a supreme insult which could even require blood vengeance.

Besides the cult of the hearth, the veneration of trees was widespread in the Caucasus. The pagan cult had its rites and community prayers and offerings, and these were usually performed near a sacred grove or tree. In all Georgia there are sacred groves and trees near the Christian churches and sanctuaries. No one was allowed to cut down these trees, or to cut off a single branch, even in areas where wood was scarce, as this would entail the wrath of God.

C. G. 776 In Georgia there are traces of the worship of a Mother-god; under the name "mother of the soil" (adgilis deda) a female deity of the earth is worshipped. In the many legends about Queen Tamar, who has a place in the pantheon of the Pshav, elements of the same cult have been preserved. A deity of the woods, protector of wild animals, is called T'q'ashi mapa ("king of the woods") by the Mingrelians, Apsat (borrowed from Osset Awsati) by the Svan, Ochop'int'e by the Khevsur, Azhvepsha by the Abkhaz, Mezith ("forest-god") by the Circassians. The latter two peoples also knew a patron of the smiths, fire and iron (Abkh. Shoshu, Circ. Tlepsh). There were numerous other deities: of natural phenomena (sun, moon,

C. G. 776 thunder), often identified with Christian saints (e.g. the god of thunder with St. Elias or St. George); patrons of agriculture, of cattle breeding, of horsemen, of thieves, etc.; and also a large array of spirits, angels, witches, and wood-giants; and finally a variety C. G. of superstitions, of which may be mentioned [754] the fear of the "evil eye."

The religious worship of the Georgian C G mountain tribes has reverted to their ancient [778] tribal religion, veiled by Christian terminology. Their places of worship, called khat'i "icon" or dzhvari "cross," are small huts of rough stones, mostly standing in sacred groves. Their only adornment are pieces of cloth or horns of the Caucasian capricorn as votive offerings. The same words denote also the supernatural power residing in these huts; it is conceived as a sort of mediator between mankind and the supreme god called Morige "he who allots, distributes." Each village and each clan have their khat'i, and each tribe, too, had a common khat'i; e.g., that of the Pshav is called Lashris dzhvari, that of the Mtiul Lomisas dzhvari. Every member of the clan considers himself a "serf" (g'ma) of the khat'i, which may send him success, or disease and death. Each khat'i possessed pastures, arable land and woods where it was C. forbidden to fell a single tree. Attached to G. it was a body of functionaries who were 793 appointed temporarily or held their office by

C. G. 771 [783] Traces of Zoroastrianism are preserved in the idea of the uncleanness of women, especially when menstruating or with child, and of corpses, as found among the Georgian mountaineers; further in some Georgian words, e. g. dzhodzhokheti "hell" (cf. M. Pers. dushakhw). C. G. [778] Remnants of Christianity in the N. W. Caucasus were the custom of planting a cross in the ground near a sacred grove, or hanging it in a sacred tree before a ceremony; C. G. [805] further the seven-day week and the names of the days, which are partly translations or mutilations of Greek names. In Abkhazia a number of Byzantine churches have been preserved.